

In the early to mid 1990's, methamphetamine began to emerge as a significant illegal substance across the western United States. Western states and communities felt the impact of methamphetamine in the criminal justice systems, social service programs, treatment programs, workforce, schools and many other areas. The most common response to the methamphetamine problem was a cry for more arrests and longer sentences but it soon became apparent that we could not arrest our way out of the problem.

While Wyoming struggled with the methamphetamine problem for many years, the issue came to a head in Casper, in the summer of 2002 when a clandestine methamphetamine lab was raided across the street from Jefferson Elementary School. The situation required that the elementary school be evacuated and some of our citizens were critical of this decision. The clandestine lab pointed out the severity of the problem in Casper and the criticism of the evacuation illustrated the lack of public knowledge regarding the dangers of methamphetamine.

Forty community and business leaders were invited to a luncheon at the Casper Police Department to discuss the problem of methamphetamine. The result of this meeting was the creation of the Casper Meth Initiative. Many subsequent programs were implemented from the efforts of this Initiative. While many of the programs were considered successful, it was clear that our efforts were incomplete and needed further direction.

In the spring of 2005, City of Casper officials met with representatives of the Tate Foundation to see what could be done to address the negative impact of methamphetamine in Casper. It was determined that a comprehensive study should be undertaken to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the efforts in Casper. The Tate Foundation and the City of Casper jointly funded a study, conducted by S.J. Miller and Associates, to look at the impact of methamphetamine on our community. Stephen Miller and Dr. Diane Galloway presented their findings in Casper Community Comprehensive Substance Abuse Report, dated October of 2005. The report gave a startling assessment of the current situation in Casper. It pointed out the strengths, weaknesses and existing gaps in service. It was determined that a more comprehensive plan needed to be developed to address the methamphetamine problem in the Casper/Natrona County area.

Casper had previously and successfully used a Community Facilitation Initiative (CFI) process to deal with the reuse of the former Amoco Refinery properties in Casper. It was decided to use this same process in developing a community response to methamphetamine. The Tate Foundation again partnered with Casper/Natrona County governmental entities to fund this CFI process. Since the initial report was issued, Natrona County as well as the towns of Mills and Evansville have joined in the partnership. A project steering committee was established and a contract was signed with Business Resource Group (BRG) to facilitate the process. Interested community members were solicited through an application process in the Casper Star Tribune newspaper. Ultimately, a cross section of nineteen (19) Natrona County residents was chosen for the CFI committee.

The committee met on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings and all day Saturday for three weeks. The initial meetings were to define the scope of the problem and to identify the programs that were currently in place. Later meetings presented new concepts and ideas. Finally, the committee developed strategies tailored to the Casper/Natrona County community. Ultimately, eighty-one (81) recommendations were prioritized and placed under the groupings of Umbrella Strategies, Identification & Early Intervention Strategies, Treatment Strategies, Law Enforcement & Judicial Strategies, and Prevention & Community Strategies. In January 2006, this final product was delivered to an Implementation Task Force, responsible for further defining the Action Steps (if necessary) and move to the Strategies forward.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Casper had a problem. Methamphetamine was the driving force behind the rising crime rates seen in the community. The foster care system was beyond its capacity with children of methamphetamine parents. There were not enough treatment beds to handle the capacity needs for those requiring long-term residential treatment. Judges were hampered with limited treatment options in dealing with habitual drug addicts. Casper needed to develop a plan to address methamphetamine.

The identification and early intervention of substance abuse was determined to be critical to the success of any strategy. It required an aggressive, multi-media public awareness campaign to educate the public. The leadership of the business community in supporting random drug testing was also essential.

The collaboration of Natrona County treatment professionals enables them to share standardized data and respond quickly to trends. It also provides judges with assessment data prior to placement in a drug court program. The lack of long-term residential treatment beds was addressed with the construction and completion of the eighty-six (86) bed facility at Central Wyoming Counseling Center.

Strong law enforcement efforts are apparent in the support of the Central Region Drug Enforcement Team by Casper Police Department and Natrona County Sheriff's Office with both supplying two officers to the Team. The Natrona County Drug Court accepts both misdemeanor and felony participants. They are hampered, however, by the lack of permanent funding at the state level.

Prevention efforts are difficult to evaluate but these efforts are coordinated through Mercer House, who works closely with the School District. The Wyoming Meth Project has saturated the media outlets with an anti-meth campaign that is research-based and targeted to teenagers.

The following accomplishments are noteworthy.

- Over 300 local businesses now require random drug-testing.
- Methamphetamine as the drug of choice has dropped from 26% to 9%.
- Addiction Severity Index (ASI) assessments are done on all drug arrests.
- An 86 bed long-term residential treatment center was completed.
- Treatment beds exist for three women with children.
- Drug arrests have decreased by 16.5% in the last 3 years.
- Burglary arrests have decreased by 28.4% in the last 3 years.
- Federal Weed & Seed Program was awarded and operational.
- Wyoming Meth Project - ad campaign is operational.

IDENTIFICATION AND EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Strategy #1

Implement an aggressive and comprehensive community-wide effort of identification and early intervention targeting Methamphetamine use to reduce the consequences of Methamphetamine addiction on youth, adults, community safety, the criminal justice system, and the healthcare system.

It almost goes without saying that community collaboration is necessary to address a problem like methamphetamine addiction. It is necessary to maximize the use of resources and to avoid duplication of efforts. There are three areas that have been particularly important in this CFI effort.

The first area is public awareness. Professionals in the various fields that work with methamphetamine are the first to see the problem. While this is important, it is when the public sees and understands the problems that improvements can be made. A marketing and advertising campaign, along with an aggressive public speaking effort, educated the citizens of Casper. This was evident by the attendance at speaking engagements and from casual discussions in restaurants or coffee shops. People were aware of the problem and were discussing the issue with factual information.

The second area that has had a tremendously positive impact has been the willingness and leadership of the business community in drug testing. Lead by the energy industry over three hundred (300) businesses require random drug testing. This has sent a very strong message that if you are going to work in Casper, you will be drug free.

Finally, the third area that has lead to the success of the CFI is the leadership and generosity of the foundations. The foundations have been critical in providing start up money for the CFI planning process to providing the bulk of the \$8 million for the construction of the residential treatment center. Much of what has been accomplished could not have happened without them.

Strategy #2

Develop a system that responds to and supports identified Methamphetamine users which facilitates immediate access to early intervention and treatment services.

Federal HIPPA requirements restrict mandatory treatment for individuals that are not in the criminal justice system. Their access to treatment is on a voluntary basis.

The success of drug courts throughout the country and in Casper is significant. Individuals that enter the criminal justice system due to a criminal offense are evaluated and treated for the root cause of their problem – substance abuse. The focus is to break the cycle of criminal behavior and re-establish a positive and productive lifestyle.

The Casper Re-Entry Center is a medium security facility that is located west of Casper. They have the capacity for one hundred eighty-six (186) work release inmates. They also operate a Therapeutic Community Treatment Program with one hundred (100) Department of Correction inmates. Finally, they have the capacity for sixty (60) individuals in a treatment program that includes probation and parole revocations and Natrona County Felony Drug Court clients.

The construction and opening of the residential treatment center at Central Wyoming Counseling has also addressed a capacity need for treatment beds. The additional eighty-six (86) beds that are provided are nearly full after just four (4) months and a waiting list has been created. This certainly reflects the significant needs in this area.

Work Group Statements:

- We support the “We Test” private employers, agencies, and organizations.

This effort has been successful with over three hundred (300) local businesses conducting random drug testing. Federal legislation restricts this effort in many areas of government or school employees to either pre-employment or for cause testing.

- We support legislation that reduces workers compensation rates for employers who adopt pre-employment and random drug screening and/or have a drug testing policy.

The Wyoming State Legislature addressed this area by creating a 5% workers compensation incentive for businesses who meet the drug testing requirements.

- We encourage the community to make a determined effort to identify and assist Meth addicts before they reach the criminal justice system.

This problem usually requires a voluntary commitment to a program. Many times it takes a “crisis” situation, such as an arrest, threatened divorce or threatened termination before a person seeks help.

Critical Action Steps:

Priority – Immediate

1. Develop a fast-track for self-identified individuals to get treatment, help, support, counseling, etc.

The Natrona County School District has a cooperative program with Central Wyoming Counseling that has counselors available in the schools to work with students who have substance abuse issues.

Public Health and Community Health Care Central Wyoming both have processes in place to immediately refer pregnant women, who have methamphetamine usage pre or post pregnancy, for counseling and treatment. This information is shared with the Wyoming Medical Center and the appropriate physician prior to the delivery date.

2. Develop a list or data base of information sources (Meth related) for treatment, services, etc.

A list of all treatment providers has been assembled and placed in a tri-fold brochure. This information is also used by the courts to refer clients for assessments.

3. Compel community leaders (government, healthcare, educational, etc.) to take the lead in this effort by voluntarily submitting themselves to random drug screening.

Legal issues make this recommendation much more difficult than it originally appears. Federal legislation exempts many classes of employees from random drug testing. Many of our public safety departments (Casper Police Department & Casper Fire Department),

transportation personnel (Natrona County School District bus drivers) and health care providers (Wyoming Medical Center personnel) do submit to random drug testing but the practice is seldom found in government or education. This is an area that will require federal legislative change.

4. Implement mandatory drug testing of all new-born babies, and their mothers.

The Wyoming Medical Center is resistant to making this recommendation mandatory. They feel that it could possibly drive a pregnant woman away from medical treatment through the fear of detection. They are also concerned that it would drive up the cost of childbirth and that the meconium test does not come back in a timely manner prior to discharge of the mother and child. Therefore, it is not useful. The Nurse Family Partnership Program does, however, include a self reporting component in their client screening.

5. Incorporate drug screening into prenatal/pregnancy testing.

This is not a standardized procedure. However, hospital personnel have received significant training in the identification of signs of substance abuse and do test upon suspicion or fear for the babies health.

6. Implement METH HOT-LINE (possible use of 211).

At this point a METH HOT-LINE has not been implemented.

7. Develop a Child Development Center type of assessment for developmental needs of new-borns testing positive.

The Child Development Center of Natrona County has instituted a protocol for all infants who test positive or whose mother tested positive for methamphetamine at the time of birth. This protocol can also be used for all who are suspicious of methamphetamine or drug involvement during pregnancy or for children under the age of five from a methamphetamine or other drug impacted residence. Additional developmental assessments can be done based upon CDC recommendations. This procedure is also used for children under the custodial care of the Department of Family Services.

8. If the “privacy laws get in the way of Identification, discover ways to implement the Strategies and Action Items, while protecting and respecting individual privacy.

Again, this is not an easy area to address. Much of the sharing of information to parties that need to know is done through signed releases from the patients. These are covered under federal HIPPA requirements.

9. **Identified Gap:** Develop a response team to immediately intervene and provide assistance to individuals, who are not in the law enforcement or criminal justice systems, who test positive for drug use at the Emergency Room, medical clinics, doctor’s offices, through a pre-employment or employer sponsored random drug test, etc.

While there are several intervention resources available, suggestions or recommendations can be made but the final decision is ultimately that of the patient and is protected under HIPPA.

Priority – High/Immediate

10. Develop and implement a method/process/procedure to address the reporting of and follow-up for medically identified Meth users, e.g., emergency room, physicians, out-patients, clinics, etc.

Medical personnel can make referrals or recommendations but cannot mandate follow-up. Aggregate data can be collected and disseminated as long as it does not contain individual identifiers.

Priority – High

11. Enhance the capability/power/authority for DFS to take whatever action is appropriate when they are called-in: for example, testing swabs or testing kits to detect drug use in a home.

The Department of Family Services has the authority to remove a child from a dangerous living condition. There is some question as to the accuracy of swab testing in homes.

12. Implement drug testing policies (voluntary or mandatory) for Trades and Trade Unions, Government Employees and Elected Officials, School Teachers and School Administration, Private Business, Nonprofit Organizations, Medical Community, Students, others.

With the exception of public safety and transportation, random drug testing of individuals in these public categories is prohibited by federal law. While it is unfortunate, it is doubtful that this legislation will change due to heavy lobbying efforts by special interest groups. Casper is fortunate that over three hundred (300) private businesses do require random drug testing.

13. Develop and implement METH WEBSITE for Parents – information, resources etc.

The Wyoming Meth Project has a website that offers information and resources for parents. (WyomingMethProject.org)

14. Develop and implement METH WEBSITE for Kids – information, resources, etc.

The Wyoming Meth Project has a website that offers information and resources for children. (WyomingMethProject.org)

15. Implement policy that all government contracts require contractors to have an active drug testing policy in place (similar to Federal Contracting requirements). Encourage private business to implement similar policy with their contractors.

This has not been addressed.

16. Develop small business assistance for work place drug testing/drug screening.

The Wyoming State Legislature passed legislation that gives a 5% Workers Compensation break to any business that has an approved drug testing program in place.

17. Develop and implement training and education for Nonprofits, Schools and Parents on signs and symptoms to look for relative to Meth use.

Many agencies and departments have individuals who make public presentations on the recognition and dangers of illegal drugs. These include the school district, criminal justice, the Wyoming Meth Project and prevention specialists.

Priority – Medium

18. Develop drug information and treatment resource package for employers to give to employees and encourage employers to offer employee assistance in identifying treatment.

Casper attorney Scott Ortiz and Tim Force, owner of the local Burger Kings, have put together a drug testing template that includes an employee assistance program. This template and information packet has been shared with many businesses at no cost.

19. Develop and implement Training Program for public workers and individuals on identification of possible Meth use or labs, to prevent inadvertent exposure to Meth; DFS, Public Health, Building Inspectors, Trash Collectors, Cable Installers, Telephone Installers, Plumbers, Hunters, Wildland Firefighters, ranchers, farmers, etc.

The State Division of Criminal Investigation, the Casper Police Department and Public Health have given many presentations on the dangers of meth labs. Federal and state legislation that limits the sale of precursor chemicals has significantly reduced the number of clandestine meth labs.

Priority – Reserve for future consideration

20. Offer low-tech/low-cost screening (San Diego Model)

Public Health tried swab testing as a test for methamphetamine residue in houses. They were uncomfortable with the reliability and stopped the testing.

TREATMENT STRATEGIES

Strategy #1

Create collaboration and a network of all treatment and support service providers so that the client is placed in the appropriate (ASAM) level of care, provided with a continuum of specific evidence-based treatment services individualized to each client, and can fluidly move among the levels as ongoing assessment necessitates.

The Natrona County treatment providers meet on a monthly basis and share information on trends and issues. This allows them to respond quickly to new drugs or trends. They utilize the Addiction Severity Index (ASI) for adults and (GAIN) for juveniles in determining the proper (ASAM) level of care recommendation. Quality Control is assured by selectively pulling ASI's and having them reviewed by other professionals. The new residential treatment center provides a long term treatment option for individuals requiring the most comprehensive care.

Strategy #2

Develop a comprehensive program which would incorporate independent assessment, certified referral sources, capacity, staffing and a system which facilitates a Methamphetamine user's

immediate access to and placement into appropriate treatment and/or support services, regardless of their personal circumstances.

The new residential treatment center completes the continuum of care that is necessary in Natrona County. The eighty-six (86) beds that were created allow the former facilities that were used for treatment to be used for transitional housing. This is another important component in the continuum of care.

Work Group Statements:

- We support immediate intervention and access to treatment for all identified Meth users whether identified through the criminal justice system, self-identified, or identified through medical, employer, or random drug screenings.

This is much easier when they are identified through the criminal justice system. Assessments and treatment programs can be required by the judge or through drug courts. Individuals who self identify their problem can voluntarily enter a treatment program. The same is true with those who are identified through a random drug testing program. Normally, the employee assistance program will make treatment available to them. Individuals who are identified through medical examinations cannot be forced to submit to treatment.

- We believe that restitution should be part of Therapeutic services.

Restitution is frequently a part of sentencing by the judges. It is also consistent with the philosophy of drug courts in requiring an individual to be accountable for their actions.

Critical Action Steps:

Priority – Immediate

1. Establish a single parent Residential Rehabilitation facility(s) where children can be with the parent.

The new residential treatment center at Central Wyoming Counseling Center has the capacity for three (3) mothers with up to two (2) children each.

2. Create intervention and treatment services for pre-natal mothers, pregnant women, and newborns.

Public health and Community Health Care Central Wyoming have a process in place to immediately refer clients when methamphetamine use is indicated prior to or during their pregnancy. They also have a nurse/practitioner program where a nurse makes pre and post delivery home visits. Two nurses are specifically assigned to the Weed & Seed area, in an attempt to increase childbirth weights and healthy babies. The designated Weed & Seed area contains several low income neighborhoods between the North Platte River and 15th St to the south and Beverly St. to Sycamore St. to the west.

3. Create a network of Residential Treatment facilities throughout the community which would cumulatively address the identified critical bed capacity shortfall.

The new treatment facility at Central Wyoming Counseling Center provides for eighty-six (86) additional treatment beds and became operational in September of 2008.

4. To address the identified shortage of Treatment Professionals throughout the state; work with Casper College and University of Wyoming to expand professional staff curriculum for Treatment services, offer incentives for Treatment Professionals to move to Wyoming, the State should be involved in out-of-state recruiting of Treatment Professionals, accelerate/expedite the State licensing process; or, adopt license reciprocity with other states.

The Addictions and Treatment Counseling program at Casper College has been expanded and is producing trained therapists for Wyoming treatment facilities. In the past three (3) years, fifty-six (56) students have graduated with a Social Work degree.

5. Ensure and maintain standardized assessment programs and require the reporting of data on a regular basis for monitoring and tracking.

All adult Circuit Court defendants are required to get an ASI assessment or a GAIN assessment for juveniles. A list of approved evaluators is provided to the defendant who makes his own choice. The Circuit Court Case Manager coordinates the appointments and reporting. Central Wyoming Counseling Center then collects, compiles and circulates a report showing the number of evaluations, choice of evaluator and ASAM level of placement.

6. Provide effective Treatment and track effectiveness outcomes. Standardized data needs to be collected regarding the various Treatment programs offered in the community to determine the effectiveness of the programs.

The State of Wyoming Department of Health recently instituted a data tracking system that should provide outcome data.

7. Create a funded treatment voucher system for adult addicts, available to those in both the criminal justice system and self-identifiers. However, individuals need to be accountable for the cost (or a portion of the cost) of their Treatment; providers might offer a sliding scale for the cost of treatment, a payment plan, etc.

A voucher system has not been created. However, Central Wyoming Counseling Center does accept clients who are charged on an ability to pay sliding scale.

8. Establish minimum standards for Treatment providers.

The State of Wyoming Department of Health has recently updated and maintains licensing standards, conducts on-site inspections, and responds to complaints.

9. Treatment services should be offered to the entire family and/or the extended family.

Family treatment and counseling services are offered by a number of treatment providers and the Department of Family Services.

Priority – High

10. Develop a Therapeutic Visitation Center, where parents can visit with their children and develop parenting skills.

While a center has not been developed, the new treatment center does provide for three (3) women with up to two (2) children each.

11. Create an integrated network of community-based wrap-around support services.

A formal network of community-based wrap around services does not exist. However, Natrona County and Casper enjoy considerable cooperation and collaboration among its service providers.

Priority – High/Medium

12. All children picked-up during a drug arrest, either by the police or DFS, will have a CAP (Child Advocacy Project) assessment.

In Natrona County all children taken into protective custody receive a well child medical exam and developmental screening. DFS makes the referral to the Child Advocacy Project or to the primary care physician.

Priority – Medium

13. Provide job training program/job skills training for individuals in Treatment.

The Climb Wyoming Program has been especially successful in providing women and single mothers with the skills to obtain better jobs and earn much higher salaries (two to three times) than they previously received. The McMurray Training Center also offers a number of job opportunities and they require random drug testing.

LAW ENFORCEMENT & JUDICIAL STRATEGIES

Strategy #1

Ensure the Law Enforcement and Judicial systems have the resources necessary to provide consistent sentencing options, judicial supervision, supervised probation, drug screening/testing, treatment options, aftercare, and monitoring of individuals entering the criminal justice system for Methamphetamine related crimes.

The current economic climate in Wyoming has been very good for law enforcement. Most of the equipment and manpower needs have been addressed. That is not necessarily the case with probation and parole officers. Caseloads continue to be high which limits their effectiveness. There is still not a consistent funding source for drug courts and that makes long term planning difficult. The court coordinator position in Circuit Court is critical for the scheduling and assessments of potential drug court participants. This funding was originally appropriated and then cut. It is important for the Supreme Court to understand the importance of the drug court philosophy and pursue solid funding for the programs.

Strategy #2

Ensure that Child Protective Services and Department of Family Services have sufficient resources to address their increasing case load as the safety and welfare of our children is the community's primary concern.

This is another area where high caseloads impact the quality of service.

Work Group Statement:

- The CFI Work Group acknowledges and supports the outstanding efforts of Law Enforcement throughout Natrona County and its communities in addressing the Methamphetamine crisis.

Natrona County enjoys strong cooperative efforts among all public safety agencies within the county.

Critical Action Steps:

Priority – Immediate

1. Create a 24-hour adult County Detox Detention Center/intake incorporating assessment for potential treatment diversion.

A 24 hour detoxification center continues to be a need for Natrona County. The new treatment center provides some options for social detoxification but medical detoxification remains a problem. The jail is used for individuals who would be better suited in a medical detoxification facility.

2. Develop and implement policy to ensure consistent treatment and accountability by all lower (Misdemeanor) Courts, for first time offenders.

Juvenile first time offenders are reviewed for possible inclusion in the Youth Diversion Program. The program is only able to take about 1/3 of the reviewed cases but 75% of those selected youth never return to the criminal justice system.

More adult controlled substance and alcohol violations are being taken through Circuit Court, due to the resources that Circuit Court judges have available to them. Due to sheer volume, however, some cases still go through municipal court.

3. Establish permanent funding for Misdemeanor Drug Court.

Permanent funding continues to be an issue for all forms of Drug Courts and juvenile probation programs. Within reasonable standards, each jurisdiction needs to operate their drug court with the resources that they have available. They do not need to be “cookie cutter” programs. The Supreme Court must adjust their thinking on the role of the judiciary in drug courts and the legislature must establish consistent funding.

4. Prosecute all Misdemeanor drug charges, both adult and juvenile, through Circuit Court to ensure consistent treatment and tracking.

The vast majority of controlled substance cases are handled through Circuit Court. This is especially true if aggravating circumstances exist. Due to caseload, some cases still go through municipal court.

5. Hire sufficient number of probation officers to meet the expanding needs.

The Wyoming Department of Corrections was able to transfer four (4) open Correction Officer positions to the Casper office as Probation & Parole Agents. An additional four (4) new agents were also hired. It is necessary to reduce the caseload of Probation/Parole Agents in order to maximize the effectiveness of probation and parole.

6. Any drug involved contact with Law Enforcement (misdemeanor or other) should trigger Child Protective Services to respond, investigate and report. Suspect questioning should always include information on any minor children, for example: "Do you have Children? Where are they?"

The Department of Family Services currently has one case manager assigned to the Casper Police Department. She works closely with the Police Department on any cases involving children. Probation and Parole Agents maintain a list of contacts from each probationer in case they are arrested and adult supervision is required.

7. Establish an information management system that will allow the sharing of information by all courts.

The Supreme Court has been working on this project for several years. There are a number of software packages that are currently used by courts of various jurisdictions that are not compatible. District and Circuit Court information is more standardized than Municipal Court data. It will be some time before this problem is fixed.

8. Hire sufficient number of Youth Diversion Officers to meet the needs of an expanded program.

This is a funding issue and it is unfortunate. When the Youth Diversion Program can boast that 75% of its clientele do not re-enter the criminal justice system, it is clear that the program works. Like every program, however, it does have capacity issues.

9. Increase the nursing staff at the Natrona County Detention Center to address the additional demands resulting from increased Meth related intakes.

The Natrona County Detention Center hired two (2) additional nurses for their facility. Due to the competition from area hospitals, however, it is difficult to maintain that staffing level. They are currently down two nursing positions.

10. Any probationer/parolee testing positive for drugs shall trigger a CAP (Child Protective Services) response.

The Department of Family Services takes protective custody of the children and a Well-Child medical exam takes place. This may include a CAP response.

11. Immediately pursue robust, sustainable, and proper funding for Law Enforcement at the state and local levels.

The current economic conditions in Wyoming and Casper have provided sufficient funding and manpower for the Casper Police Department. The current authorized staffing level is ninety – eight (98) sworn officers. The Division of Criminal Investigation continues to supervise the Central Drug Enforcement Team that is located

in Casper. Both the Natrona County Sheriff's Office and the Casper Police Department have two officers assigned to the Team.

12. Address and enforce City/County code enforcement with special consideration of drug houses under the "dangerous building" clause.

An additional Code Enforcement Officer has been hired under the Weed & Seed grant. In the past year, 728 South Melrose and 1029 West Collins have been demolished. Two other buildings, located at 252 East G and 1310 ½ South Conwell, are scheduled for demolition. The property at 1818 East Yellowstone is in the initial Notice and Order process. The funding for the demolitions comes from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in support of the Weed & Seed strategies and programs.

13. Establish standards of remediation for buildings, houses, and rental units where Meth has been present.

The Natrona County Standards for Clandestine Lab Remediation were adopted May 17, 2006 by the Casper-Natrona Board of Health, with an effective date of August 1, 2006. Standards, policies and procedures are in place. Employees have been trained in proper testing procedures. If buildings are not cleaned to required levels, enforcement action will be taken under the Universal Dangerous Building Code.

The 2008 Wyoming Legislative Session also passed SF-0019, which established lab remediation standards.

Priority – High/Immediate

14. Support drug testing, reporting, and data tracking in all probation – share information with appropriate courts, law enforcement and judicial.

All probationers and parolees in Natrona County are currently entered in the joint law enforcement computerized records system. When an officer stops a probationer or parolee, it is flagged in the system and the officers complete a field interview card that denotes date, time, place and associates. This information is then available to the Probation /Parole Agents. Last year 1,924 contacts were recorded in the system. It has greatly enhanced the oversight of these individuals.

15. Ensure that Law Enforcement has state-of-the-art equipment, is engaged in the regional law enforcement network, and avails itself of the new technology and approaches.

The Casper Police Department is fortunate to be well equipped. All officers are issued Portable Breath Testers (PBT's) for alcohol and have chemical testing kits readily available for testing controlled substances. The detectives have undercover recording devices and other surveillance equipment available for their use. The Central Drug Enforcement Team is also well equipped with everything needed to work undercover investigations.

Priority – High

16. Develop and implement a substance abuse assessment program for every first time entry in the criminal justice system.

The judges currently require an Addiction Severity Index (ASI) review of every drug related offender. This program has been supervised by a Court Coordinator until funding was lost. New funding has been found through the Central Wyoming Counseling. It is critical that this position be funded.

17. Expand the current ISP (Intense Supervised Probation) program.

One of the newly assigned probation positions is designated as an Intensive Supervised Parole (ISP) agent, which is supervised by a Lead Agent.

18. Adopt a “Strategic Hamlet” model in critical neighborhoods, to include low-level Law Enforcement presence coupled with other community/neighborhood building services; consider the use of “Weed & Seed” grant.

In October of 2007, the Federal government awarded a Weed & Seed grant to the City of Casper for the area between the North Platte River to 15th St. and from Beverly St. to Sycamore St. This is a \$1 million grant for a five (5) year period. It was determined that this area included twenty percent (20%) of Casper’s population but was responsible for fifty percent (50%) of the crime. The program includes graffiti abatement, neighborhood clean-ups, abandoned vehicles, enhanced drug enforcement, enhanced alcohol enforcement, positive late night youth activities, public service supervision, traffic enforcement and others.

19. Encourage retailers to restrict the sale of needles and behind the counter sale of ephedrine/pseudo-ephedrine.

Walgreens was the first pharmacy to require a prescription for needles. Many of the pharmacies, like Wal-Mart, now keep their ephedrine and pseudo-ephedrine behind the counter or limit the purchase of them.

Priority - Medium

20. Assess the need for a Felony Drug Court.

Felons are admitted into the Natrona County Drug Court on a regular basis, as the capacity allows.

21. Assess the need for a Juvenile Drug Court.

A very similar program that is operational is the Circuit Court Juvenile Probation program.

22. Evaluate the possibility of empowering the existing court system with the same attributes for treatment and supervision as the existing Misdemeanor Drug Court.

Circuit Court Judges have many more sentencing options available to them, including Drug Court. Many times a District or Circuit Court Judge will transfer a defendant to the Drug Court Judge for sentencing options.

23. Ensure that adequate court room facilities are available to serve the needs of the community.

The remodeling and addition to the Townsend Hotel building should address court needs for several years.

24. Support any Treatment program that the Sheriff requires to address the Meth/drug issues in the Detention Center.

The Natrona County Detention Center provides Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings, as well as other mental and substance abuse counseling and evaluation services.

25. Assess the need for another Prosecutor to handle the expanding caseload due to Meth.

The two (2) Assistant Prosecutors assigned to misdemeanor cases carry extremely high caseloads which can negatively impact their ability to handle those cases. Additional prosecutors are still needed.

26. Establish an informational communication vehicle to educate residents on what information to collect if they observe suspicious behavior in the neighborhoods: vehicle license number, description of individuals, street address of house, etc.

Much of this type of information or presentation is handled by the Crime Prevention officer of the Casper Police Department. He makes neighborhood presentations on the Neighborhood Watch program and other crime prevention efforts.

27. Increase the number of GALs (Guardian Ad Litem) to handle increased juvenile caseload.

The number of children in foster care has decreased which has improved this situation. At one time there were as many as one hundred thirty-five (135) children in foster care with eighty percent (80%) having a meth connection. There are currently one hundred and eight in foster care with twenty six per cent (26%) having a meth connection. It remains, however, a very important and time consuming service. Recently, GALs were re-structured and placed under the Public Defenders Office. This change has provided more funding and improved training for the GALs. The number of GALs is currently sufficient for the existing caseload.

PREVENTION & COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Strategy #1

Build and mobilize community collaborations into an ongoing comprehensive coordinated prevention effort, integrating and leveraging resources of neighborhood involvement, family strength, schools, child protection, public health, community organizations, faith based organizations, government organizations, medical community, private business, media, law enforcement, courts, corrections, and treatment providers.

Prevention efforts are always difficult to measure. How do you measure what didn't happen because you did something or several things? However, all of the treatment programs have a built in measurement and assessment component. It is also important that all of our community programs send a clear, consistent and factual message concerning the dangers of substance abuse.

This is accomplished through good coordination, cooperation and communication between the participating agencies.

Strategy #2

Create a community partnership with the Natrona County School District, law enforcement, parents, and neighborhoods to establish drug free schools and effective drug free school zones.

A strong partnership exists between the Casper Police Department and the Natrona County School District. Two (2) Police Officers are assigned as School Resource Officers and they split the Casper schools by east and west. They work the schools full time and have a good working relationship with the faculty and students.

The Central Wyoming Counseling Center also partners with the school district and has professional counselors in the schools providing services to the appropriate students.

Strategy #3

Prevention programs targeting youth and young adults will be honest, factual, and straight forward to avoid sending mixed messages and misinformation.

Mercer House coordinates prevention programs throughout the community and partners with the school district to insure that there is a consistent message. The Wyoming Meth Project provides research based marketing that is aimed at junior high and high school aged students concerning the dangers of meth. The Casper Police Department, Mills Police Department, and the Natrona County Sheriff's Office provide DARE instructors in the school system.

Strategy #4

Develop and create a model to galvanize the compassion of the faith-based community to address youth/community prevention programs, intervention, and treatment wrap-around services.

The LINK has been included in the youth late night activities funded through the Weed & Seed Program. This faith based outlet for teenagers has been actively involved in various prevention based programs. They also facilitate monthly luncheon meetings for community youth group leaders. These meetings enhance communication and coordination among the youth groups.

The Natrona County Public Library also maintains various substance abuse prevention material that is readily available to the public.

Work Group Statements:

- Prevention in youth will result from treatment of parents.

Mercer House currently offers several on-site and off-site parenting and family counseling programs.

- We are a community that values, and takes responsibility for, its youth, young people, and citizens.

The newly initiated court/community service program estimates that they will soon be providing over five hundred (500) hours of community service work each month. This work is designed to hold the juvenile accountable for his actions and build community pride.

- We are a community that stands for community and family values and will not tolerate indifference.

Legal issues limit the amount of restrictions that can be placed on parents for the actions of their children. The Natrona County/Casper community has definitely met its obligation to deal with the issue of substance abuse. Natrona County, Casper, Mills and Evansville community leaders have participated in the CFI process, The Casper Area Meth Initiative, and fundraising for the residential treatment center at Central Wyoming Counseling Center. The strong stand taken by these governmental entities has made a difference in Natrona County.

- We support teachers as role models for our children and we encourage them to submit to voluntary drug screening, recognizing and acknowledging the presence of legal issues.

Legal issues create problems for even voluntary drug testing. The school district does require random drug testing for transportation employees.

- We recognize the Meth is only one of many addictive drugs. We are opposed to the use of all addictive drugs and those considered to be gateway drugs.

Casper has experienced a significant decline in the use of methamphetamine. In 2005, 26% of the individuals assessed for treatment listed methamphetamine as their number one drug of choice. By 2008, that number had declined to 9%. Alcohol abuse, however, has risen sharply.

- We recognize and acknowledge the value of all grandparents and extended families that have stepped forward to “parent” children of Meth users, to foster and nurture these children into healthy young people.

Mercer House conducts programs that help grandparents who are involved in raising grandchildren.

- We support and encourage individuals and organizations to develop new and unique initiatives to address the prevention of Meth use in our community.

The Wyoming Meth Project continues to increase across the state.

Critical Action Steps:

Priority – Immediate

1. Communicate the message that if an individual uses drugs, their ability to parent will be in question; *use drugs, loose your kids!*

With a DFS caseworker assigned to the Casper Police Department, there is an almost immediate response when children and drugs are involved in a case. The children go into DFS custody and are removed. The same holds true for individuals on probation or parole. Agents immediately contact DFS and the children are removed from the home.

2. Initiate community-wide parenting education because drug prevention starts at home. Instill a Community-parenting expectation – build a culture of good parenting: web site, media communication elements, educational classes and materials.

Such as: Have dinner together as a family, reduce the drama of life, minimize the multiple challenges of school, observe age appropriate behavior, know where your child is, turn-off the TV, etc.

Mercer House offers several parenting and family counseling programs at their facilities and various outreach locations.

3. Find ways (countywide) to create markers to track and measure the effectiveness of prevention programs targeting both youth and adults: what’s being done, number of adults and kids contacted, measurement criteria might be reduction in police calls or reduction in Meth use. Monitor and evaluate annually.

Virtually all of the grant programs administered by Mercer House require an evaluation component. This information is submitted to the State Division of Substance Abuse. There are currently no state databases that allow for comparisons.

Another method that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of efforts is to monitor the decrease in use of methamphetamine. While it cannot be attributed to just prevention efforts and programs, it does suggest success. In 1995, 26% of individuals seeking treatment listed methamphetamine as their drug of choice. In the final quarter of 2008, 9% listed methamphetamine as their drug of choice.

4. An expanded program of Vocational Technology (VoTech) education should be implemented by NCSD.

The Natrona County School District serves over two thousand (2,000) jr. high and high school students each year with over thirty (30) different vo-tech programs.

5. Aggressively promote youth organizations that build character, values, and healthy decision making.

Both the school district and Mercer House promote various youth mentoring programs. Money from the Weed & Seed budget also fund twenty-eight (28) late night youth activities at the Boys & Girls Club, City Recreation Center, YMCA, and the Link.

6. Publish maps which include GIS data, similar to those in the Casper Community Comprehensive Substance Abuse Report, indicating areas of high levels of Meth activity, law enforcement activity, and code enforcement issues on a Meth Awareness web site or through some other media available to the public.

The City of Casper continues to expand the capabilities of the GIS section. The Police Department and the Weed & Seed program continually use this mapping data in allocating resources.

Priority – High

7. Adopt portions, or all, of the “Broken Window” model of non-traditional law enforcement and neighborhood clean-up.

The Weed & Seed program has targeted neighborhood clean-up and other non-traditional law enforcement efforts as priorities. Early indications are that this is a very successful program.

8. Identify and clean up houses and rental units where Meth has been used. Establish and make public a list of these properties.

The 2008 Wyoming Legislative Session passed SF-0019, which established lab remediation standards. Natrona County Public Health has policies and procedures in place to deal with the problem on a county level.

9. Educate homeowners, rental unit owners, and hotel and motel owners/management on how to properly clean areas where Meth has been present to avoid exposure to hazardous substances.

A local Casper business, Trauma Clean, has been very active in cleaning suspected buildings and in educating the owners. Public awareness programs have educated the public to “know before you move” into a new residence. Both tenants and landlords are more aware of the potential dangers of drug residue in a residence.

10. Develop and offer after school programs, in a safe environment, that are fun, offer educational enhancements, provided by peers and caring adults. Recognize youth for their participation.

The Boys and Girls Club, in particular, does an outstanding job in this area. They handle an average of six hundred and sixty five (665) youth on a daily basis at their five (5) locations. This is also covered by the late night youth programs sponsored out of the Weed & Seed budget.

11. Develop and expand year-round, communitywide, teen-oriented, non-school specific programs and activities for junior high and high school age youth (8th through 12th grade).

This is addressed by the late night program sponsored out of the Weed & Seed budget. There is also the Casper Kids, Cops, and Ghost program where the local minor league baseball team provides two thousand (2,000) general admission tickets to area law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement officers then distribute them, throughout the summer, to youth who are exhibiting positive behavior.

12. Expand the foster care (foster homes) for teens

The problem of homeless teens is particularly disturbing. The school district has one counselor assigned to the problem and approximately two hundred (200) students currently attend school but have no permanent home. They live wherever they can and school officials try to keep them in school until they get a diploma.

13. Develop a semester curriculum of health science that incorporates information about drug use, to be offered during 9th through 12th grade.

It has not been possible to create a full semester curriculum for this issue, however, existing health classes at the high school level includes a portion of the course to drug awareness and prevention.

14. Review David Moore's community-schools comprehensive model for potential adaptation or elements of the model appropriate for this community.

Mercer is still working on a civic portfolio project where local businesses provide incentives for high risk youth to become involved in healthy activities.

Priority – Medium

15. Develop and encourage expanded employment opportunities for youth.

Tim Force, the owner of Burger King, has led the way in this area. Tim requires random drug testing of all employees and employees many youth. He suggests that early jobs that require random drug testing provide a better future workforce after graduation.

16. Re-energize and expand the Neighborhood Watch Program to include Meth Awareness.

The Neighborhood Watch Program has been active and re-energized since 2006. In 2008, three (3) new Neighborhood Watch groups were started.

17. Create peer group speaker panels to address students, to provide an honest, reality-based view of drug use and addiction.

The school district currently uses various mentoring programs to address this area.

Priority – Reserve for future consideration

18. Investigate the Colorado Models for screening renters and work with rental unit owners to create and adopt guidelines.

While no model or existing program exists for identifying problem renters with a drug history, the "know before you move" campaign has helped with this concern.

19. The community should make every effort to ensure that every child has a relationship with at least five positive adult mentors as they are growing-up.

The school district addresses this area through the various mentoring programs. Several community prevention or mentoring programs also are aware of this philosophy and include it in their programs.

20. Increase and/or create opportunities for peer mentoring.

Several youth programs include mentoring in their programs. Some of these are the Youth Advisory Council, the JV Club, the Late Night program, and the Library youth programs.

21. To address the increasing demand for foster care providers, establish a boarding school with strong and supportive links to the community for parenting, nurturing, mentoring, etc. so that the children can remain in the community.

Nothing has been done in this area.

CONCLUSION

Have we learned anything from this whole process? We certainly have. While methamphetamine is the reason that we began this process, we now have an infra-structure in place that will address any substance abuse issue. Whether it is alcohol or some yet to be determined drug of choice, our infra-structure should handle it.

Unfortunately, substance abuse problems will always be with us. They will negatively impact our public safety, workforce, health care, family service, corrections and education systems. It is important for the state and local jurisdictions to work cooperatively on these problems. While every community has their own resources, Casper was in a unique situation where they were able to generate local funding for the construction of the long-term residential treatment center at Central Wyoming Counseling Center. Just as important, however, is the state's continuing commitment to fund operational costs. These state and local partnerships are critical to any future successes.

Public awareness is a key component to any community effort to address substance abuse. The citizens must be educated, with factual information, to the dangers of controlled substances. This breaks down the barrier of denial and allows communities to pursue solutions. Efforts must be made to accept all public speaking opportunities and to provide easy access to printed material. The use of a multi-media program, such as the Wyoming Meth Project, is necessary to target selected age groups.

The Casper business community became a powerful partner in the Wyoming Meth Initiative with their support of random drug-testing. Many of these businessmen are recognized leaders in the community and bring credibility to the issue with their support. Random drug-testing sends a clear message that, "If you are going to work in Casper, you will be drug free."

The Natrona County treatment providers meet on a monthly basis and share data. They utilize standard assessment tools, such as ASI and GAIN, to place clients based upon ASAM criteria. They also selectively review each others work to insure consistency. This cooperation allows them to respond quickly to changes and guarantees quality control.

Data gathering and reporting continues to be a problem. A tremendous amount of data exists that is either not collected or is not required to be submitted. This limits the ability to forecast trends or measure the effectiveness of programs. This issue must be addressed at the state level. The state must require municipalities, schools, hospitals, law enforcement, the courts, health care and treatment providers and others to submit appropriate data on a timely basis. It is then the states responsibility to analyze and disseminate this information back to the communities so that they can make solid decisions based upon factual data. We are at a disadvantage without this information.

This effort to address methamphetamine and other substance abuse continues to be a journey rather than a destination. We are able to see progress, however. Good job, Casper!